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Reagan's Guest Is Described as 'Steel Butterfly'

Secret CIA reports describe President Reagan's photogenic guest from the Philippines, Imelda Marcos, as the "steel butterfly" and the "flaming Imelda"—a woman of uncommon charm, chic and ambition.

No less than seven secret psychological reports analyze her personality, with titillating details about everything from her sexual exploits to her political manipulations.

Why does the Filipino first lady, glittering beauty though she is, command the attentions of the awesome CIA? She is much more than dictator Ferdinand Marcos' wife; she is his probable successor and a power in her own right. One source called her "the Evita Peron of the Philippines."

The CIA also suspects she is "behind some of the more strident anti-U.S. rhetoric" that Marcos has mouthed. Why? Washington hasn't always treated her, the CIA suggests, "in a manner befitting her rank and station."

Perhaps this is the reason that former CIA chief William Colby personally conferred with her last July to make arrangements for the Marcos' state visit this week.

Imelda is a former bank hostess and beauty queen whom Ferdinand Marcos courted with daily gifts and promises of undying love. In the fullness of time, the dictator's ardor reportedly dampened, and there followed those mundanities that apparently attend the palling of true love, even among the world's immortals.

What the marriage may lack in romance, however, is made up in power. According to a top-secret CIA report, "the Marcos marriage is essentially a business and political partnership, but no one is sure just how close this working relationship is. At times, the two clearly compete with one another; at others, the president will give in to her unless he believes a vital interest is at stake."

Another profile, written by a female CIA analyst and reviewed by my associate Dale Van Atta, offers this cutting critique: "Mrs. Marcos is ambitious and ruthless. Born a poor cousin of landed aristocracy, she has a thirst for wealth, power and public acclaim, and her boundless ego makes her easy prey for flatterers. Although she has had little formal education, she is cunning."

She has her sights, the CIA believes, on the presidency itself. With a husband 12 years her senior and afflicted with a serious kidney disease, she may soar to the top.

"In the event of President Marcos' death," the CIA predicts, "his wife would doubtless make a bid to re-

place him. Many Filipinos believe that Marcos has left a political will naming his wife his successor."

She is both loved and resented by the populace, loved for her Jacqueline Kennedy-like grace and resented for "her freewheeling lifestyle featuring world junkets and jet-set friends." She also squanders money at a time when most Filipinos live on the edge of poverty.

She is opposed, too, by a military hierarchy who are not eager to have another Evita Peron thrust upon them.

Short Leash: The Defense Department may soon be given an independent inspector general as its watchdog over waste, but he may be kept harmlessly chained up in the doghouse.

House and Senate conferees laboriously worked out a compromise to create a military inspector general. But the authorization bill renders him neither independent nor effective.

The military establishment has resisted efforts to set up the new office, contending that national security secrets might be leaked if the IG weren't under "authority, direction and control" of the secretary of defense.

The compromise permits the senators to veto any investigations involving "situations where disclosure of information could jeopardize the national security."